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On Other Pages

US Church Agency Favours Recognition of China . . . . . Page 2
Cautious Reaction in Finland to Pope's Initiative . . . . . Page 2
Federation of Churches Suggested for Canada . . . . . Page 2
Atheist Propaganda Ineffective? . . . . . Page 3
French Protestants Urged to Act Responsibly . . . . . Page 3
Mission Restrictions Reported in India . . . . . Page 4
In Brief . . . . . Page 4

US National Council "Receives" Statement on China

(Hartford, Conn.) - The 200 members of the General Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA have unanimously voted to "receive" a message to the churches adopted last November by a World Order Study Conference, held under the auspices of the council. Meeting late in February in Hartford, Conn., the policy-making General Board pointed out that its action neither approved nor disapproved the controversial statement which included a recommendation calling for United States recognition of China and its admission to the United Nations. (See EPS No. 45, 1958)

The message will now be transmitted to the council's Department of International Affairs for whatever action it considers necessary. Council officials pointed out that it may or may not come before the board again.

Mr. Ernest A. Gross of New York, chairman of the International Affairs Department and of the World Order Study Conference, told the board that such conferences did not "profess to speak for anyone other than the delegates in attendance and that, even as to these, there is no claim of unanimity on every specific issue".

In other action, the board also approved a statement "reiterating our loyalty to the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ and our opposition to atheistic Communism"....

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Dr. Edwin T. Dahlberg, council president, told the board members that no matter how controversial a major social issue may be, the Christian Church is morally and theologically required to speak its mind. "It was the vigorous pronouncements Jesus made on controversial matters that sent Him to the cross," he said .... "We are commissioned by the authority of the Holy Scripture to speak with conviction and power in all the areas of freedom, justice and truth providing always that we ourselves shall be humble and teachable, never pretending to an infallibility God has never given to any church." EPS, Geneva

US Church Agency Favours Recognition of China

(New York) - The Council for Christian Social Action of the United Church of Christ has gone on record as favouring the recognition of the Chinese government by the United States and its admission to membership in the United Nations.

"We believe that world order, justice and peace would, under certain conditions, be better served by the inclusion of the People's Republic of China in the UN and its recognition by our government than by continuing the present situation," a Council statement said.

The declaration was reported to be the first time that a national Protestant denominational agency in the United States had endorsed proposals for the recognition of China.

The statement said that recognition does not mean "any lessening of vigilance or of concern for the freedom and security of non-Communist nations". The council said that before China is recognised "a settlement in Korea and international agreements protecting all the people on Taiwan" must be made. EPS, Geneva

Cautious Reaction in Finland to Pope's Initiative

(Helsinki) - The Finnish Ecumenical Council has welcomed the Pope's plan to use the forthcoming General Council as a means of furthering the unity of the Church of Christ. At the same time the council said in a statement, that "if the Roman Church wants real unity and fellowship on the basis of mutual understanding it ought to take part in the ecumenical work of the World Council of Churches and not expect other churches to attend its own denominational meetings".

Bishop Aleksanteri of the Orthodox Church of Finland said that Orthodox experience showed that "this kind of Roman proposal means an effort to draw all other churches to the Roman Church on the conditions of the latter. The Orthodox Church", he declared, "has its own doctrines and traditions, older than those of the Roman Church. It would be cowardice to deny the holy inheritance given to us by God and to accept the doctrines and traditions of the Roman Church." EPS, Geneva

Federation of Churches Suggested for Canada

(Toronto) - An official of the United Church of Canada has urged the establishment of a Federation of Christian Churches in Canada which would include all Protestant groups.

The Rev. William G. Berry, associate secretary of his church's Board of Evangelism and Social Service, said the federation could include all denominations, "both liberal and literal, high and low, liturgical and free".

Dr. Berry told the annual meeting of his board that there was something hypocritical in praying that nations might get together from pulpits to which preachers of other denominations would not be invited. EPS, Geneva

Atheist Propaganda Ineffective?

(Prague) - "We must admit that so far we have achieved very little in the field of atheist propaganda," is the conclusion of a Communist youth leader reporting to the third Congress of the Czech Youth Union.

Published in the Czech paper, "Mlada Fronta", the report expresses regret that most students in Czechoslovakia still cling obstinately to their religious conviction, showing a regrettable "bourgeois mentality" and being indifferent toward politics.

As an example, the report cites a student who credited her good marks in an examination on "Marxism and Religion" to the fact that she had gone to confession before the exam.

"If our students try to overcome their nervousness by amusing themselves, we have no objection", the report continues. "But if they go to church and make a confession before taking an examination on Marxism, this shows a very serious discrepancy in their minds and behaviour, which cannot be ignored in the Communist Youth Union." EPS, Geneva

French Protestants Urged to Act Responsibly

(Niort, France) - French Protestants were criticised for shirking their responsibilities at the thirty-second national congress of the Protestant Christian social action movement, "Christianisme Social".

In a review of France's present political situation, the movement's general secretary, Mr. Maurice Voge, said "Our Protestantism has simply drifted along with every wind of doctrine. What we say is not sufficiently loyal to our faith nor sufficiently trenchant." Among the most urgent problems, he cited revival of social awareness and the need to take a stand against possible threats to human freedoms.

Professor Paul Ricoeur of Strasbourg, co-president of the "Christianisme Social" movement, told the conference, which was in session from February 27 to March 1, that there was a growing gap between the demands of the Gospel and the technical, economic and social problems of today's world. He stressed that modern man raises the question of justice because of the pressure of his own needs rather than because of a sense of moral indignation.

Professor Ricoeur said that the key question was no longer the sharing of property but the sharing of power. He told the conference that in such a situation the Gospel did not provide Christians with economic principles but urged them to exercise pressure in favour of an ethic of responsibility.

Other speakers at the meeting included Mr. Alfred Sauvy, director of the French National Institute of Demographic Studies, Mr. Hubert Deschamps, former governor of Madagascar and Mr. Georges Severac of the National Institute of Agronomy. General theme of the sessions was "New Forms of Justice and the Social Crisis". EPS, Geneva

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Mission Restrictions Reported in India

(New Delhi) - The Indian government will no longer admit foreign missionaries into frontier provinces and primitive tribe settlements, according to KIPA, Roman Catholic news agency in Fribourg, Switzerland. The number of missionaries already at work in these districts will be reduced, reports say.

The government order, KIPA reports, also says that restrictions may be placed on the work of missionaries already in the country "for reasons of public security". After vacation abroad, missionaries can obtain permits to return to India if "their residence in India did not give cause for serious misgivings" before their departure. Government permission must be obtained before opening new mission centres, but medical, educational and technical training institutions may be staffed by foreigners if no Indians are available to fill the positions. EPS, Geneva

In Brief

Archbishop Makarios of the Greek Orthodox Church in Cyprus visited the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Geoffrey F. Fisher, in London last week, following the signing of the agreement between Britain, Greece and Turkey settling the future of the island. The meeting was called an opportunity of renewing friendly relations between the Church of England and the Orthodox Church in Cyprus.

* *

April 12 has been designated as "Ecumenical Sunday" by Anglican Bishop F.H. Wilkinson of Toronto, Canada, who has asked all priests in the diocese to arrange an exchange of pulpits with non-Anglican clergy. The bishop's action followed a statement issued by 27 bishops, priests and laymen, proposing specific steps toward reunion to the United Church of Canada (see EPS No. 45).

* *

A paperback hymnal including more than a hundred hymns "significant in the life of the Christian Church" is expected to be published within a year by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, as a result of more than four years' work by members of the commission on music of the council's Department of Worship and the Arts.

* *

Pastor Paul Hansen of Denmark, will succeed Pastor Mogens V. Zeuthen as the Lutheran World Federation's secretary for European minority churches. Pastor Zeuthen will return to Denmark at Easter as pastor of the parish at Tønder.

* *

A study of modern Roman Catholicism and other Christian faiths, authorised by the Lutheran World Federation, is expected to be started in February 1960, according to Dr. Carl E. Lund-Quist, LWF executive secretary. The date was set by the federation's officers at a meeting in Vienna in February.

* *

King Paul and Queen Frederika of Greece have cabled Archbishop Makarios, head of the Greek Orthodox Church in Cyprus, expressing "warmest and heartiest wishes on the liberation of Cyprus". At the same time, Archbishop Theoklitos of Athens sent a message to Greek Premier Constantine Karamanlis saying that the Orthodox Church in Greece was gratified over the settlement of the Cyprus question.

* *

The Lutheran quarterly "Theology and Church", published in Helsinki, says that a total Roman Catholic community of 2,100 in Finland in 1958 required the services of twenty-two Roman Catholic priests, twenty-one of whom are non-Finnish. In addition the periodical lists five lay brothers and 32 non-Finnish sisters.

* *

Dr. Norris Wilson, executive director of Church World Service, the relief and rehabilitation arm of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, has been awarded the Gold Medal of the Yugoslav Red Cross for "his achievements in the realisation of friendship and cooperation" with the Red Cross in Yugoslavia. The award was made last month when Dr. Wilson visited Belgrade.

* *

Titular Bishop Ezekiel Tsoukalas of Nazianos, 46, head of the Greek Orthodox Midwestern Diocese in the United States, has been elected Archbishop of Australia and New Zealand, with the rank of Metropolitan. He succeeds the late Metropolitan Theophylactos Papathanassopoulos. There are about 100,000 Orthodox in Australia and New Zealand. The seat of Archbishop-elect Ezekiel will be in Sydney.

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The Methodist Church in Finland is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. The Finnish church has 3,200 members, 25 ordained ministers and 30 congregations.

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The Rev. Stephen Szamoskozi, 48, Senior of the North Presbytery of the Hungarian Reformed Church, has been elected bishop of the Danubian District. He succeeds Bishop Albert Bereczky who resigned last year. Bishop-elect Szamoskozi, who also edits "Reformatusok Lapja", a Reformed Church weekly, will be consecrated on March 12.

* *

Pastor A. Klamer has been appointed to give spiritual advice to persons who get in touch with the Dutch ecumenical radio station, IKOR, seeking help with problems. He was named by the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church at its meeting in February.

* *

Officials of the German Kirchentag, which will be held from August 12 to 16 in Munich, will soon begin negotiations with the government of the German Democratic Republic concerning the participation of Christians from East Germany. DDR pastors are scheduled to preach at Protestant services in Munich on the closing day of the Kirchentag.

* *

One of the largest YMCA buildings in the Middle East will be erected in Nazareth, a centre for Christian, Jewish and Moslem youth. The building is one of 168 capital development projects in 38 countries now being undertaken by the "Buildings for Brotherhood" campaign sponsored by the International Committee of YMCAs of the United States and Canada, in cooperation with national movements.

* *

A committee made up of Austrian churches cooperating in Evangelical Hilfswekk, relief agency of the Austrian churches, have gone on record supporting "World Refugee Year". At its annual meeting in Vienna, the group also said it hoped to build a centre in a refugee parish and to send financial help to Christian refugees in Asia.

EPS, Geneva